



Harrison Heritage News

Published monthly by
Harrison County Historical Society, PO Box 411, Cynthiana, KY 41031
Award of Merit - Publication or Journal, 2007 Kentucky History Awards Program

Our 25th Year

December 2007 - Vol. 8 No. 12

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Enjoying the simple pleasures at Oddville, KY - Photo, Sharon Fowler

At Home on the Western Front

WWI Letters from Harrison County Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines

Philip Naff

No doubt many have already seen the PBS broadcast of Ken Burn's "The War" earlier this fall. The series provides a unique narrative of World War II through the eyes and words of those who lived through it . . . and survived long enough to tell it on film.

This year and next mark the 90th anniversary of America's participation in an even older war, World War I. It's name, designating it as the first of the world wars, seemingly at times has been the only thing to keep it in popular memory (It was once called the "Great War"), but it was a war with far-ranging consequences in which approximately 4.7 million Americans served, suffering 116,516 deaths and 204,002 wounded (The statistics for World War II are 16.1 million, 405,399, and 671,846 respectively).

While one now often hears the depressing statistic of how many of the "Greatest Generation," those who served in the military during World War II, are passing away daily, few have been the remarks about the veterans of the generation which preceded them, the "soldier boys" (and a few girls, too) of World War I. *USA Today* reported this past March, shortly before beginning of the 90th anniversary of America's entry into that war, that there were only four surviving American veterans of it still living, ranging in age

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Harrison County Historical Society

Bob Owen, President
Billy Fowler, Vice President
Janie Whitehead, Secretary
Dorothy Slade, Treasurer
Bill Penn, editor: pennwma@aol.com

Program Notes

November 15, 2007

Harold Slade made an excellent presentation in honor of Harrison county veterans. Harold is the only surviving veteran from his unit from Harrison County. Billy Fowler did a brief update on the Handy House. Basically not much has changed, but the prospect of preservation still seems hopeful at his point. Program: Kenny Simpson presented an excellent slide show presentation on the trip that he, along with a group of other local folks, took out west to the Grand Canyon area. He also brought along several wonderful photos for everyone to enjoy. (Submitted by Billy Fowler).

Special Notice: We are updating our subscriber list - and we need to hear from you, our faithful. If you enjoy and appreciate HHN, please let us know. Do you have suggestions, ideas? Would you be interested in receiving the newsletter on-line? Is your subscription near expiration? Please respond. (HHN, P.O. Box 411, Cynthiana KY 41031)

Correction: In the October 2007 issue the editor somehow switched our Secretary's name from Janie to Julie. My apologies to Janie Whitehead. B. Penn, ed.

Harrison County History Calendar

December 8 - Potluck 6 p.m. First Methodist Church - bring a dish.

January 17 - Historical Show and Tell - Bring an interesting object with a story to share with everyone.

Feb. 21 - Heather Ladick owner of Zeppelin Threads.

March 20 - Steve Flairty, author of *Kentucky's Everyday Heroes*.

President's Corner

Bob Owen
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Childhood Christmas Memories

We are entering the holiday season. For many, this means a gathering of family and friends. This is a good time to pass on family history to the younger generations and a great opportunity to tell them about the Christmases of your youth.

For example, I can remember as a child staying at my Grandparent Howk's house on Christmas Eve night. Santa Claus would visit on Christmas Eve and give us a gift. Christmas morning, we children would get up and rush down stairs to stare at the closed, locked door to the parlor where the tree was. Oh, yes, we were not allowed in until after church and all the guests arrived. We tried to sneak a peek through a porch window, but alas, the blinds were closed. So after breakfast, it was off to church.

Now many of the children who attended the service had already received and played with their toys/gifts. We were jealous and anxious for a short service so we could see what we had received. But even after church, we were not allowed into the "magic" room until all the guests had finally made it to the house. I am not sure kids today would understand such an approach. Finally, we would be admitted to the wonderland and dazzled by the toys.

I remember receiving many fine toys, a few of which I still have to this day. One year my half-uncle and I received electric cannons which fired wooden bullets. You plugged them into a wall socket with a fairly long cord, dropped a bullet into the barrel, aimed and pushed the button. Wham! A bullet would go flying across the room hopefully missing adults and fine china, lamps, etc. Today, manufacturers would not even sell such a toy due to the liability, but we really enjoyed them.

Once all the gifts were handed out, we all trooped into the dining room for a huge dinner. And what a meal it was. Following the meal, the adults would find a place to lie down and we kids would head back to the toys. I am sure you also have similar stories to share with the younger generations so they will have a better understanding of the past.

Thanks to all our members for your support this past year. It is time to pay the 2008 dues, still only \$12. This year we will be asking everyone to complete a form which we will use to improve our database and better serve you. Have a very Merry Christmas.

Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum

Martha Barnes, President

CHRISTMAS 2007

Special Christmas wishes from all of us at the museum. For those of us who are keepers of history, Christmas indeed is significant. "Let us keep Christmas, its meaning never ends...the time of year to wish happiness and good will to friends and loved ones, near and far...the time to share the joys of the past and the hopes of the future, and to remember all we have to be thankful for. If we can do this for a day, why not forever? Let us keep the true spirit of Christmas. Today, tomorrow, and always."

Our new museum surroundings truly are "merry and bright." Our decorations appeal to visitors of all ages. The old drugstore Santa, the simply decorated tree with a quilt for a tree skirt, the toys (everything from a 100 year old doll to a Red Ryder gun), the elves on a seesaw from Patton's window, Christmas Raggedys, decorations from Newberry's, Ben Frank-

lin, and Howard's, etc.etc.help us remember and to appreciate.

If you need a gift idea, please consider one of our historical publications available at the museum. Prices range from \$5 to \$20 - a book is a present that can be opened again and again - no batteries required.

If you are not a regular at the museum, we encourage you to visit. We even offer free season passes (that's an inside joke). Bring your family and friends or treat yourself. The museum at 124 S. Walnut Street - the wonderful old Rohs Theatre Building - is open on Fridays and Saturdays, 10 A.M. - 5 P.M. (859.234-7179)

I close with these words of Fra Giovanni written in A.D.1513 - "And so, at this Christmas time, I greet you, with the prayer that for you, now and forever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

Harrison County, Kentucky, Historical Publications

Books Are Welcomed Christmas Presents

available from Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum, 124 South Walnut Street, P.O. Box 411, Cynthiana, KY 41031 (859-234-7179);

- Boyd, Lucinda, *Chronicles of Cynthiana*. This is a reprint of the rare 1894 edition, which includes family histories, the famous account of David Sheely and his ghost, and other historical sketches and scattered accounts of persons and events connected with Cynthiana and Harrison County. 262 pp. Hardbound. \$20.00.
- June 1896 *Cynthiana Democrat* reprint. This was a special edition with biographical sketches and photographs of prominent men and women; many photographs of buildings; city/county government, church and school information is included. 24 pp. Paperback, 12"x18". \$5.00
- *Cynthiana Since 1790*. Virgil Peddicord (1986). Mr. Peddicord attempted to list the owners/businesses located on each lot from the founding of the city through the mid-1980s, including subdivisions added through 1923. 171 pp. (See separate index below). Paperback. \$20.00
- Index - *Cynthiana Since 1790* (William A. Penn). Mr. Peddicord did not prepare a comprehensive index for his book. This supplemental index contains about 3,500 names and a reference city street map. 30 pp. Paperback. \$3.00
- *Writings of Colonel William M. Moore, (1837-1927)* compiled by Andrew B. "Andy" Peak (2002). Includes 1921-1922 articles he wrote for the *Cynthiana Democrat* about his life. 10 family photographs; index; paperback, 71 pp. \$10.00/ \$3.00 shipping. Limited supply.
- *This Old House* by Katherine Wilson. Now back in print, this book tells the stories of twenty-six early Harrison Co. houses and the families who have occupied them. 70 pp., new index, paperback. \$15.00 (An index is available for earlier editions, which had no index).
- *Cromwell's Comments*, by John M. Cromwell (1862-1951) is a reprint of Cromwell's 1928-1941 *Cynthiana Democrat* columns on the history of Cynthiana (Harrison Co., KY). William A. Penn and George D. Slade, editors. Paperback; preface; 2 maps; 21 photos; 4 illus.; annotated; index; 200 pp. (*Cynthiana Democrat*, 2002), \$10 plus \$3 shipping.

Shipping/handling for above books: Please include a handling and shipping fee of \$4.00 for first book (unless otherwise noted above), \$2.50 for each additional book; you will be notified if special shipping fees apply. No shipping fee on Index - *Cynthiana Since 1790*, if ordered with the book. Make checks/money orders payable to "Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum." No credit cards. Prices/fees subject to change.

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from 105- to 109-years-old. In November, just six months later, an op-ed piece in *The New York Times* by author Richard Rubin noted that there were only three WWI veterans living, two who had been in basic training at war's end, and only one who actually made it to the Western Front in France, but not as far as the trenches, and who had to tell a fib about his age to get there!

By next November, at the time of the 90th anniversary events marking the end of the First World War, it seems unlikely that any American veterans will still be alive. Too much time has passed for there to be any reunion of World War I survivors as there was at the Mall in Washington for the dedication of the nation's World War II

Memorial in 2004, and they World War I veterans will not have benefit of the technology to have their experiences recorded in so many ways as the World War II veteran still does. However, using the one technology afforded them at the time of their service, the historian of today can still visit and feel the experience of the World War I veteran from Harrison County.

Their day was not one which included radio, television, cell phones, satellites, or e-mail, and so the only way they could get news of their welfare to loved ones at home was to send a telegraph . . . or write a letter.

A partial archive of veterans' letters exists for the Harrison County family at large, and those are the letters which were published in the weekly editions of *The Cynthiana Democrat* and *The Log Cabin* during World War I. The volume of soldiers' letters published in these papers was really just a trickle of the total that must have been sent home overall, however, before long the letters offered for publication by family and friends came to be so many that they were formed into a weekly columns in each newspaper, letters which now have become an archive of nearly four-hundred first-hand accounts of the war. At first they were censored, but then as the war came to a close, the letters revealed more and more about their lives fighting the "big fight" that was World War I. Most of the published letters were from Harrison County natives and residents, but occasionally a letter merited enough interest from the editors of Cynthiana's papers, J.M. Allen of the *Democrat* and J.M. Wilson, Jr. of the *Log Cabin*, to publish it as they would any other, for all Americans were in the same boat, so to speak.

Letters came across the editors' desks from all across the country, from the temporary training camps which popped up coast-to-coast in order to process and train all the recruits, among them Camp Zachary Taylor, near Louisville, or Ft. Thomas, Ky., where many from Harrison County were first processed, to far-ranging outposts

overseas, from steamy Santiago in the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean to arctic Archangel, in the frigid north of Russia.

In addition to those letters which were volunteered by the families and friends who received them, the *Democrat* and *Log Cabin* were able to generate a supply of their own correspondence through wartime promotions. The *Democrat* initiated a "tobacco fund," soliciting donations from the public

to buy tobacco products to be sent to the soldiers training at camp or fighting on the front lines in France and elsewhere. Many soldiers were grateful and one wrote that the tobacco "sure came in handy," that "tobacco is the next thing to ammunition!"

The *Log Cabin* did its part, too. To keep track of the progress of the war and of news from the home front, the soldiers abroad had access to such prominent publications as the *New York Herald*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Stars & Stripes*, the *London Daily Mail*, and weeklies or monthlies such as *American Magazine*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *McClures*, but they missed reading about the news at home in Kentucky. Promoting the idea that the hometown paper was "like a letter from home," the *Log Cabin* offered free subscriptions to those in the service who weren't already subscribed beginning in April, 1918 (that is, until the War Industries Board forced an end to the practice later that year in order to conserve paper).

"Some Life"

Both newspapers' efforts supplemented the work of the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. to help make the soldiers feel like "Old Kentucky" wasn't so far away after all. Joseph L. ("Joe") Russell of the 109th Aero Service Squadron in France wrote: "You ought to see how nice the Red Cross is to us boys. They gave us all a sweater each and cigarettes. Their hearts are surely right. Some of the ladies in New York, when they talk to us, cry like babies, and you know how much of that I can stand. They take us to their homes, give us lots of stuff, [and] take us to the best shows in town and to the swell hotels. They say there is nothing too good for



the soldiers, and I don't think so either, for this is 'some life;' but I can't say I don't like it, for it is better than I looked for."

For the troops there would be only one wartime observation of either Thanksgiving or Christmas before the armistice of November 11, 1918. Marine Corporal Linus L. Lebus wrote of that Thanksgiving in France that "we had a real American Thanksgiving dinner, served in courses, as follows: soup, celery, turkey (more than I could eat), dressing, potatoes, young onions, gravy, bread, fruits, nuts, cakes, two kinds of pike, coffee, and cigars. Now, should we not be thankful to a government that, when it is overwhelmed with the responsibility that ours is, remembers that we like a real Thanksgiving dinner? Everything was splendidly cooked, and we all enjoyed it to the limit. Then to make an already complete day more so, in the evening we received mail."

While letters from home went uncensored, wartime regulations prevented soldiers overseas from releasing information detailing the location of the troops in the field; "Somewhere in France" or "some port in France" was the closest any soldier could approximate his position on the Western Front to his family and friends, assuming he did actually know where he was. Other letters came from "somewhere in Belgium," or "somewhere on the Atlantic," or were written "on the front." However, one soldier, stationed at Ft. Morgan, Alabama and yet to be assigned to overseas duty, enthusiastically gave his location as "on my way to victory!"

Up until the armistice, most of the published letters were simply from "somewhere in France," i.e., the Western Front. The French had given the American troops a hearty welcome, and did their best to make the soldiers feel at home. When one soldier wrote "this is some country" he meant it as a general compliment. Army Corporal Herbert C. Garrison exclaimed "My! I shall never forget the day we pulled into the harbor at Saint Nazaire, how they cheered us! They even wanted to kiss us when they met us." After two years, however, he wrote that "they have become accustomed to us and do not pay so much attention to us, as before. But if you have a friend or sweetheart, look out! You must kiss the whole family when you go to see them and when you leave."

The Americans liked the French, but couldn't keep from remarking about some of their strange ways. Sergeant Fred Center wrote that "the French people are very funny. They keep their cows in one room of their houses" and that "the women here wear wooden shoes, and they walk around sounding like horses." Another soldier-correspondent told of how the French keep a great many "little donkeys, they surely must be about the smallest of the family, for they are not

much bigger than a bar of soap. To see such an animal hitched up to a great big cart looks plumb ridiculous. Sometimes they have a big Percheron horse in a dray with one of those little 2x4 asses hitched in front of him. I saw a lady in town with a push cart. She had a dog in harness pulling while she pushed, and he certainly would pull, too. Maybe here is where the saying 'work like a dog' originated."

Private B. Ogden Moore, who had been on both sides of the English Channel, noted that "the contrast between the English and French people [was], indeed, very marked. Unlike the British, the French bubble over with enthusiasm, on occasion smile and gesture and seem to get more joy out of life. They are very hospitable and treat us with a deference that makes the soldier like them. And let me tell you they have some swell-looking women over here. They are (i.e., some of them) beauties, besides, they dress and appear in such a winsome way, which is enough to make a bulldog break his chain."

Army Private Ransom O. Herrington noticed the girls, too, but he might have had some idea that his letter would be published when he wrote, "There are some good-looking girls over here, but I like the American girls the best."

And of course the soldiers wrote of the combat they experienced. Before censorship regulations were lifted and any particular battle or battlefield could be mentioned by name, many a frontline soldier invoked Civil War General Tecumseh Sherman's old adage, "War is hell!" to describe the location or situation. One soldier wrote that "if he [Sherman] were here now he would say it was worse than that." An "Annex to hell" was the description given by Private Roy Terry, of Berry, Ky., to the scene of action he experienced at Chateau Thierry with the "Fighting Fourth" Division, where, for twenty-six days, he was "with scarcely anything to eat and nothing to drink, fighting in the daytime and lying in holes at night" until what was left of the "Fighting Fourth" was relieved.

After the armistice, the letters began to pour in from German towns and cities of the Rhineland with strange-sounding names such as Coblenz, Herchbach, Rheinbohl, Laufenbacherdorf, Gerolstein, Maxweiler, as the Army of Occupation took charge. They were places which most had never heard of before, which weren't all that important in themselves, but for a little while soldiers from Harrison County called them home.

The Correspondents

Such are some of the tales told of life on the Western Front in the letters of the soldiers who served as virtual correspondents for the papers of Harrison County. Over six hundred World War I soldiers were officially designated as Harrison

County veterans; a good number of them, nearly two hundred, had their letters were published in the *Democrat* and *Log Cabin*. Might you know any of them? Were any of the letter-writing soldiers among your fathers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins, or neighbors who served in World War I?

The names of the seventy-eight soldiers, sailors, and Marines, almost all Harrison County natives or residents, whose letters were published in the *Democrat*, were, in alphabetical order: Walter H. Ammerman, Earl E. Anderson, Harold N. Appel, Harvey Barnes, Reuben B. Batson, Irvine Benton, Frank Bishop, Phil(I)ip A. Bowers, Thomas Raymond Boyers, Kenneth H. Breeze, Ches. Brown, Stanley Brown, Elwood Buckner, C.C. Buenger, William B. Carmichael, Samuel Forrest Carter, W. Ruby Cason, Joe G. Clark, Richard Coffey, Ben H. Conner, Joe Costello, Charles Crombie, Henry L. Ewing, Ray H. Faulkner, Jno. K. Feedback, Arbor D. Fields, Fred D. Fightmaster, Claude Fitzwater, Isaac T. Garnett, Hubert C. Garrison, William D. "Will" Gibson, Joe M. Henson, Clarence Hieatt, Harry Lee Hieatt, Alex J. Hiten, James "Buddy" James, Richard Jameson, J. Samuel Jones, George D. Judy, Carl P. King, Hubert W. King, J.B. King, Dr. Paul B. Lail, Linus Lamb Lebus, Paul B. Letton, J.M. "Jack" Magee, Ray Mastin, Wesley McDaniel, William H. "Will" McDaniel, Henry H. McNeil, B. Ogden Moore, Richard C. Moore, Henry C. Morrison, Arthur "Pat" Murphy, Claude T. Nickell, Walter Eaton Nierstheimer, Clarence Owens, Gaylen "Buddy" Poindexter, Robert Harold Poindexter, George Prove, Russell S. Rankin, Poindexter A. "Dexter" Renaker, Joseph L. "Joe" Russell, John Sipples, James Stuper, Seneca Swimme, Omer Swinford, Fred Davis Taylor, Roy Terry, Dr. L.N. Todd, Joseph E. Torrence, Frank Tyre, Edgar VanHook, Thomas Warth, Eureka Whitaker, D.B. Whitson, Dave Williams, and Walker W. Wilson (Note: Some authors of the letters and/or their letters were published in both papers).

The *Log Cabin* published 140 letters of those serving in the States and overseas. They were, in alphabetical order: Albert Alder, Harold M. Appel, Thomas Asburry, Joe H. Avey, David Barnes, Harvey Barnes, Reuben B. Batson, Frank Bishop, Green Brown, Allan Calhoun, Forrest Carter, Ollie Carter, Ioley Caswell, Fred Center, John C. Clemons, Cannon Clifford, Ben H. Conner, Charles Copes, Thomas E. Courtney, Irvin Coy, Clarence W. "Prof" Denham, Clarence Dennis, Clay Doane, W. Thomas Dunn, William T. Dunn, J. Mirabeau "Big Bill" Durbin, Alfred Blaine Earle, Albert Edincott, Henry Ewing, John K. Feedback, John T. Feix, Claude Fitzwater, C.N. Florence, Clarence Florence, John F. Florence, Shirley

Florence, Leonard Lee Fogle, Strauder Franklin, Oliver W. Gaines, Herbert C. Garrison, John T. Garrison, Jr., A.G. Gerlach, William D. "Will" Gibson, W.H. Goodwin, John B. Gully, Miss Edith K. Hanna, Ransom O. Herrington, Taylor Sharrard Hilen, Andrew J. Hill, Clarence M. Hill, Fred W. Hill, Veach Hill, Russell Hoffman, Orie M. Howard, Charles Howes, Russell Huffman, Oral Jett, Wilbur Johnson, George Jones, Grover Judy, Rector "Rex" Kearns, Charles Lee Kendall, Thomas J. Kendall, Hubert W. King, Charles Erwin Lail, Dr. Paul B. Lail, Linus Lamb Lebus, Swilford D. Lemons, Wallace Lillie, Claude Linville, Frank Linville, John A. Lizer, Rodney W. Martin, J.L. McClain, Arvel McKenney, Aubrey Frank Milner, B. Ogden Moore, O. Morgan, Wood Morrison, John M. Ott, Dicy Peddicord, Homer Peddicord, Jesse Peddicord, Sam Perkins, Mike Perreaut, Will C. Perrin, George Price, Adrian Rainey, Lora B. Rankin, Russell S. Rankin, Herbert Rawls, Roy E. Renaker, Tom Ed Renaker, Charlie L. Richie, Albert Roper, Charles Rorer, Joseph L. "Joe" Russell, Chris Schanding, William S. "Will" Sharp, William R. "Will" Shington, Harvey Smith, Bailey B. Sosbe, Milton Sosbe, Oscar B. Sowder, Orie Spegal, Walter Spegal, Ora Stevens, Robert Stivers, Orlie T. Stone, Omer Swinford, Charles Lewis Taggart, Lewis Taggart, James T. Talbott, James Walker Taylor, John H. Terry, Roy Terry, Joseph E. Torrence, James K. "Jim" True, Irvin Turner, Frank Tyree, James W. VanDeren, Charles Wagoner, Elmer Harva Wagoner, Clemence Waxman, John William Webb, Thomas H. Wells, Enoch Whirles, David B. Whitson, Estill P. Wiggins, Sam Wiggins, Harry Rhodes Wiglesworth, Laroy C. Williams, Robert H. Williams, Rolah Williams, Claud Wilson, Walker W. Wilson, C.A. Wright, Calvin Wright, Forest Wright, and William F. "Willie" Zeigler.

All the published letters of these soldiers have been collected, transcribed, and edited and will be made available to the public in the coming year. More information about a release date will be available in a subsequent newsletter and at www.harrisoncountyky.us/ww1/.

It is not presently known who, of these Harrison County soldier-correspondents, was the last to die, but Richard Rubin ended his article in the *New York Times* with what should happen upon the death of the last U.S. veteran. He wrote, "It's not that World War I will then become history; it's been history for a long time now. But it will become a different kind of history, the kind we can't quite touch anymore, the kind that will, from that point on, always be just beyond our grasp somehow. We can't stop that from happening. But we should, at least, take notice of it."

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